

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8795

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 LIMA 1491

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: CGEN, AMGT, PE
SUBJ: CONSULAR AGENCY - PIURA - PERU

REF: LIMA 77 4311

SUMMARY

1. THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT THE CONSULAR AGENCY IN PIURA REMAIN OPEN AND NOT BE CLOSED IN MARCH, 1978 AS SCHEDULED IN REFERENCED COMMUNICATIONS. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE MODEST COSTS OF MAINTAINING THE AGENCY ARE CERTAINLY JUSTIFIED BY THE SERVICES OFFERED TO AMERICAN CITIZENS LIVING IN AND TRAVELLING THROUGH NORTHERN PERU.

2. BACKGROUND. CONSULAR AGENCY PIURA SERVES 500 MILES OF PERU'S COASTAL PLAIN FROM ECUADOREAN BORDER TO TRUJILLO. THIS DESERT REGION CONTAINS FOUR MAJOR CITIES; TRUJILLO (500,000), CHICLAYO (300,000), PIURA (200,000) AND TUMBES (50,000) AS WELL AS MANY SMALL PORTS AND AGRICULTURAL CENTERS. BETWEEN 250 AND 300 AMERICANS ESTIMATED TO BE PERMANENT RESIDENTS OF DISTRICT. NUMBER OF TRANSIENT AMERICANS VARIES BUT THERE ARE ALWAYS YOUTHFUL BACKPACKERS AND SURFERS AS WELL AS OTHERS DRIVING SOUTH ON THE PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY.

AGENCY WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1967 PRIMARILY TO REPORT ON AND BE OF ASSISTANCE TO AMERICAN TUNA VESSELS. TUNA BOAT PROBLEMS HAVE
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DIMINISHED DURING RECENT YEARS AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO SEIZURES SINCE 1973.

3. PRESENT ACTIVITIES. THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF AMERICAN CITIZENS IS BY FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT SERVICE PRESENTLY PROVIDED BY THE AGENCY.

DURING THE PAST YEAR, THE AGENT ASSISTED THREE AMERICANS IN DIFFICULTY WITH THE POLICE AND IN EACH CASE EITHER PREVENTED AN ARREST FROM OCCURRING OR INSURED THAT DETENTION WAS A MATTER OF DAYS RATHER THAN WEEKS. HE ALSO VISITED TWO AMERICANS INCARCERATED IN PIURA FOR TWO YEARS ON AT LEAST A BI-WEEKLY BASIS UNTIL THEIR RELEASE LAST JULY. HE HANDLED SEVERAL WHEREABOUTS CASES AND ASSISTED A NUMBER OF RESIDENT AMERICANS IN THEIR APPLICATIONS FOR PERUVIAN RESIDENT VISAS AND WORK PERMITS, SALVO CONDUCTOS (FOR CROSSING INTO ECUADOR), AND WITH OTHER DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED WITH THE LOCAL BUREAUCRACY. IN OTHER AREAS THE AGENT RECEIVED 30 OR SO PASSPORT APPLICATIONS AND FORWARDED THEM TO LIMA FOR FINAL PROCESSING (ALL THESE AMERICANS WOULD HAVE OTHERWISE HAD TO COME TO LIMA) AND PERFORMED AN EQUAL NUMBER OF NOTARIAL SERVICES. HE ALSO HAS PROVIDED VISA INFORMATION ON A DAILY BASIS TO PERUVIANS WISHING TO TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES.

IN NON CONSULAR AREAS, THE AGENT HAS RESPONDED TO EMBASSY REQUESTS FOR ECONOMIC DATA (PARTICULARLY CONCERNING FISHERIES AND AGRICULTURE) AND HAS FILED SEVERAL SPOT POLITICAL REPORTS INCLUDING BRIEF SITUATIONAL EVALUATIONS.

SUPPORT INFORMATION

THE PIURA CONSULAR AGENCY SHOULD REMAIN OPEN BECAUSE:

A. QUALITY SERVICE IS THE NAME OF THE CONSULAR GAME AND THE EMBASSY SIMPLY CANNOT SERVE AMERICAN CITIZENS IN THE NORTH AS
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WELL AS THE AGENCY DOES. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS AND IN CASES, SUCH AS LONG TERM ARRESTS, WHERE FREQUENT CONSULAR CONTACT IS REQUIRED FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME. CONSULAR STAFFING HAS CONSISTENTLY BEEN AT LESS THAN AUTHORIZED LEVEL DURING THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS MAKING FREQUENT OR SHORT NOTICE VISITS OUTSIDE OF LIMA, MOST DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE. FURTHERMORE, THERE IS NO WAY AN OFFICER CAN ARRIVE IN AN UNFAMILIAR AREA AND PROVIDE THE LEVEL OF SERVICES THAT A LONG TERM RESIDENT WITH GOOD CONTACTS CAN PROVIDE.

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B. WHILE THE AGENCY'S QUANTITY OF WORK OUTPUT IS RELATIVELY SMALL, SO IS ITS COST. THE PRESENT CONSULAR AGENT EARNS AN ANNUAL SALARY OF \$2,700; RECEIVED \$2,147 FOR TRAVEL EXPENSES DURING FY 77, AND USES ONLY A SMALL RUG, ONE DESK, FOUR CHAIRS, AN AIR CONDITIONER, AN ENGLISH DICTIONARY AND A FEW OTHER SMALL ITEMS SUCH AS A COUPLE OF SEALS AND STAMPS TO MAINTAIN HIS OPERATION. THESE LIMITED COSTS HAVE BEEN MOSTLY OFFSET RECENTLY EITHER BY MONEY SAVED THE U.S. GOVERNMENT OR BY MONEY SAVED U.S. CITIZENS.

EXAMPLE A SEVERAL MONTHS AGO THE BROTHER OF A U.S. SENATOR WAS INVOLVED IN A SERIOUS TRAFFIC ACCIDENT NEAR PIURA. THE INTERVENTION BY THE CONSULAR AGENT INSURED THAT THE AMERICAN WAS NOT ARRESTED AND HIS EFFORTS DURING THE ENSUING TWO WEEKS RESULTED IN THE AMERICAN PAYING ONLY 35,000 PERUVIAN SOLES RATHER THAN THE 120,000 SOLES DEMANDED IN THE LAW SUIT. THIS WAS A SAVING TO THE AMERICAN OF MORE THAN \$1,000.

FURTHERMORE, IF THE SITUATION HAD NOT BEEN RESOLVED IN ITS EARLY STAGES THE AMERICAN PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN REQUIRED TO REMAIN AT HIS EXPENSE IN PIURA FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AWAITING LEGAL RESOLUTION OF THE CASE.

EXAMPLE B. SEVERAL MONTHS AGO A YACHT RAN AGROUND IN NORTHERN PERU AND THE AMERICAN SKIPPER AND HIS SON WERE BROUGHT TO LIMA FOR QUESTIONING. THE CONSULAR AGENT WENT TO THE SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT AT NINE O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING AND ARRANGED FOR THE UNCLASSIFIED

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YACHT TO BE GUARDED UNTIL THE RETURN OF ITS OWNER. WITHOUT THIS ACTION, THE YACHT WOULD DOUBTLESSLY HAVE BEEN STRIPPED CAUSING A SUBSTANTIAL VALUE LOSS FOR THE OWNER.

EXAMPLE C. PRIOR TO LAST JULY THERE WERE TWO AMERICANS SERVING TWO YEAR SENTENCES IN PIURA. TO MEET MINIMUM VISITATION REQUIREMENTS THE EMBASSY WOULD HAVE HAD TO SEND AN OFFICER NORTH EACH MONTH AT A TICKET COST OF \$50 AND PER DIEM COST OF \$35 (IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO GO AND RETURN ON THE SAME DAY) PER TRIP. NOT ONLY IN THIS MORFETHAN ONE THIRD OF THE AGENT'S ANNUAL SALARY BUT THE EMBASSY WOULD HAVE BEEN HARD PRESSED TO FREE THE NECESSARY OFFICER TO MAKE THE VISITS.

5. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

IF THE DEPARTMENT CONCURS IN THE EMBASSY'S RECOMMENDATION TO MAINTAIN THE AGENCY IN PIURA THE FOLLOWING, MORE FORMALIZED PROGRAM WILL BE IMPLEMENTED.

1. THE CONSULAR AGENT WILL MAKE REGULAR SCHEDULED TRIPS TO TALARA TO TAKE PASSPORT AND REGISTRATION OF BIRTH APPLICATIONS FROM AMERICANS EMPLOYED THERE BY THE OIL INDUSTRY.
2. THE AGENT WILL MAKE LESS FREQUENT BUT PUBLICIZED TRIPS TO OTHER MAJOR NORTHERN CITIES TO PROVIDE AMERICAN CITIZENS SERVICES.
3. THE AGENT WILL MAINTAIN A CURRENT "KEY CONTACT" LIST FOR THE OF ALL EMBASSY PERSONNEL TRAVELLING TO THE NORTH.
4. THE AGENT CAN OFFER FURTHER ASSISTANCE TO OUR NIV UNIT BY CONTINUING AND AMPLIFYING HIS INVESTIGATIONS OF VISA FRAUD AND BY IDENTIFYING WELL KNOWN AND ESTABLISHED NORTHERN PERUVIANS SO UNCLASSIFIED

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THAT THEIR VISA APPLICATIONS CAN BE EXPEDITIOUSLY PROCESSED.

5. THE AGENT WILL BE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT SHORT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EVALUATIONS ON A REGULAR BASIS AND DO SPOT REPORTING WHEN WARRANTED.
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